



**NTSB** National Transportation Safety Board

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*Office of Highway Safety*

**Grade Crossing Accident  
Elmwood Park, Illinois  
November 23, 2005**



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# Introduction

David S. Rayburn

# Investigative Team

- Dan Walsh Highway
- Jennifer Morrison Vehicle
- Burt Simon Human Performance
- Hank Hughes Witnesses
- James LeBerte Witnesses
- Robert Accetta Forensic Mapping

# Investigative Team

- Chris Voeglie                      Electronic Recorders
- Richard Hipskind                Railroad Track
- Jay Kivowitz                      Railroad Operations
- Ruben Payan                      Railroad Signals
- David Rayburn                  IIC/Highway
- Mark Rosenker                  Member On-Scene

# Report Development Staff

- Avis Clark Audio Visual
- Robert Molloy Statistical Research
- Gwynne O'Reagan Editor
- Julie Perrot Recommendations
- Rafael Marshall Project Manager

# Parties To The Investigation

- Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC)
- Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT)
- Village of Elmwood Park
- Northern Illinois Regional Commuter Rail Corporation (METRA)
- Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)
- Cook County Sheriff's Office

# Safety Issue

Need for a grade separation



CAUTION  
RAILROAD  
TRACKS  
NO TURNS

Town of  
Howard Park

U.S. R.S.H.

U.S. R.S.H.

HOTEL



**West Grand Avenue**

704\*480



**75th Avenue**

2005/11/23,17:42:36  
2005/11/23,17:43:54  
2005/11/23,17:42:48



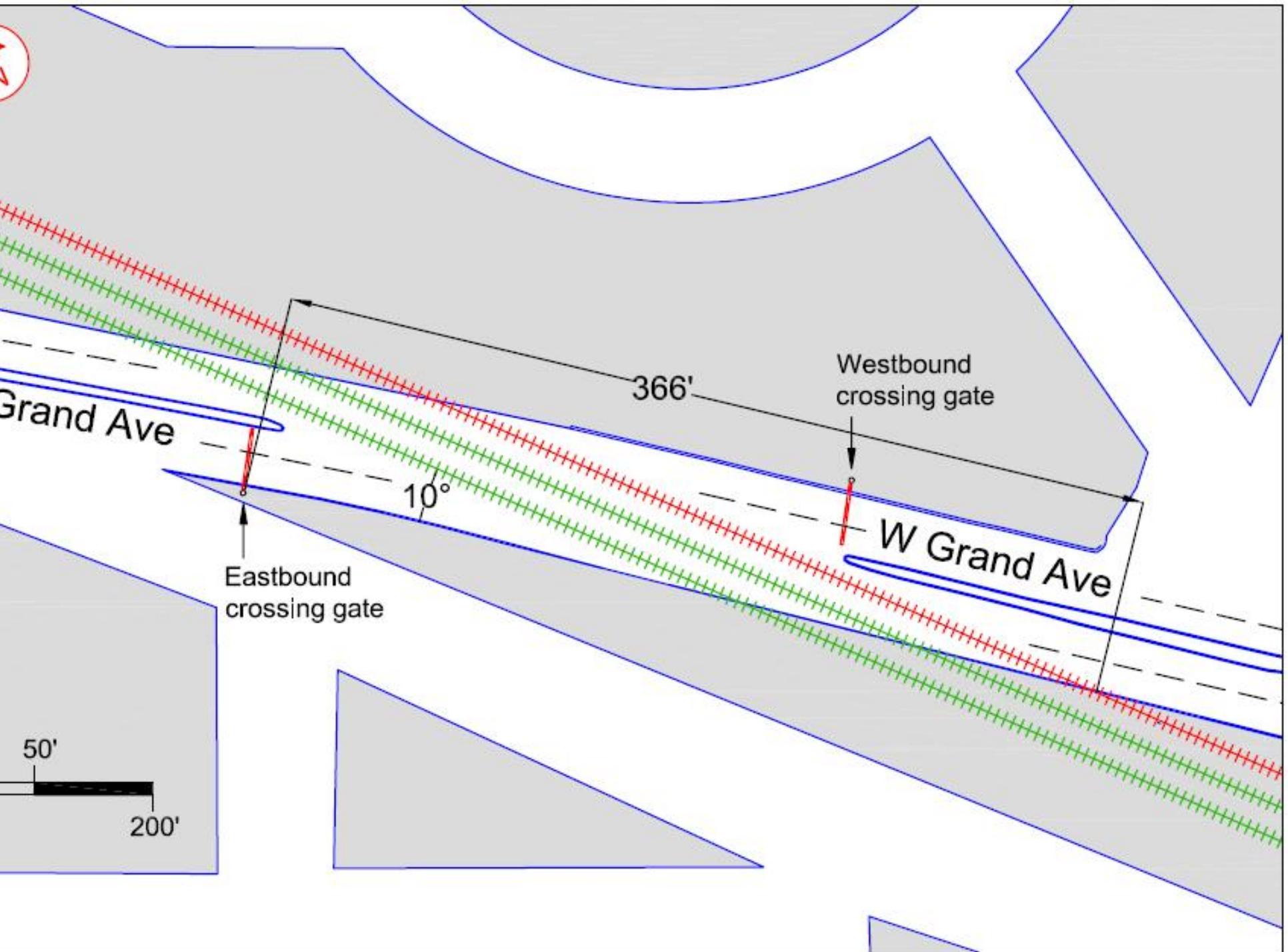
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# Highway

David S. Rayburn



# Grade Crossing Traffic

- Average daily vehicle traffic: 20,900
- Average daily train volume: 107
  - 82 commuter trains
  - 25 freight trains

# Crossing Features

Acute angle

+ 4 highway lanes

+ 3 railroad tracks

+ Heavy traffic volume

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Unique grade crossing

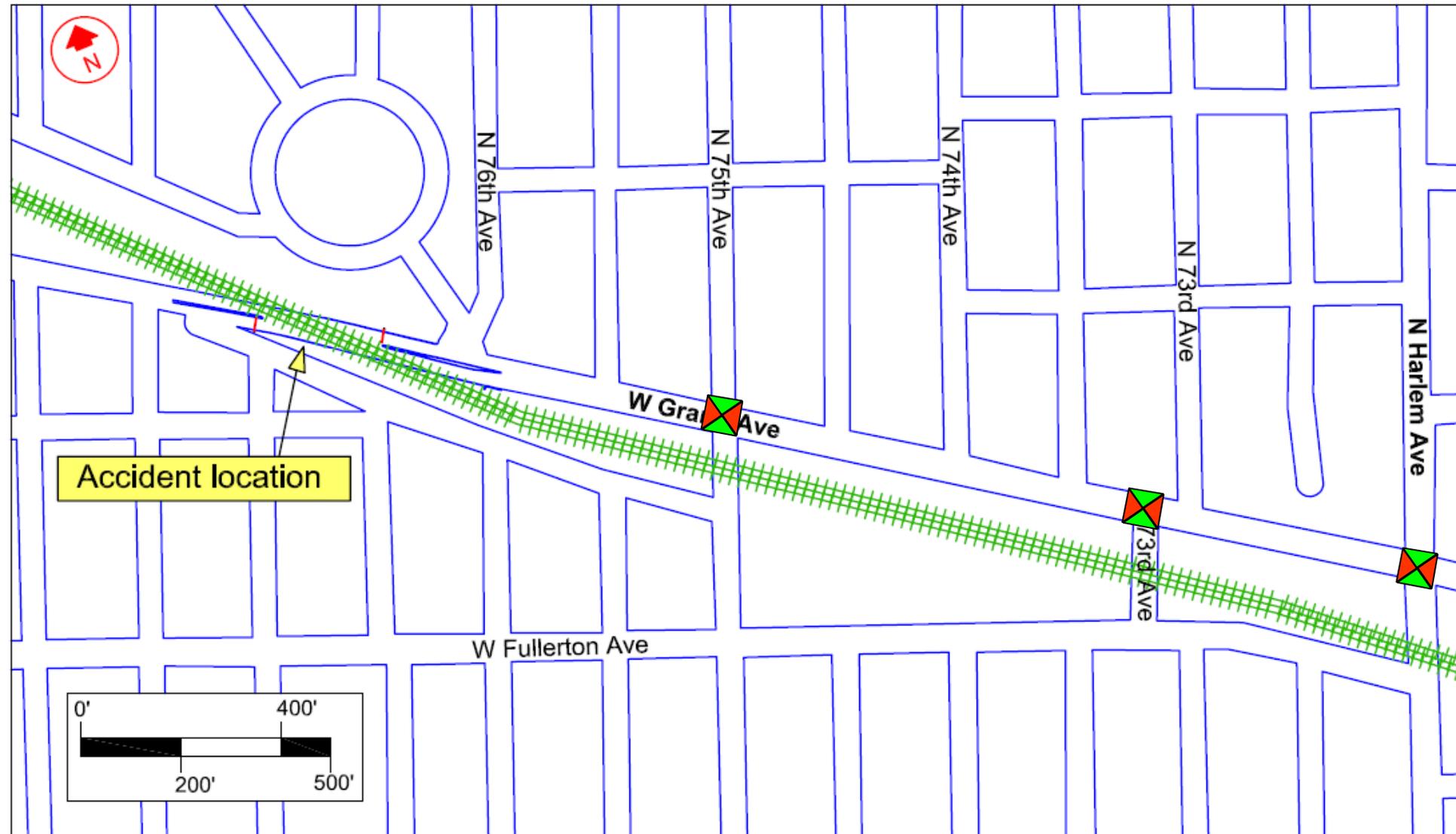


ELMWOOD PARK

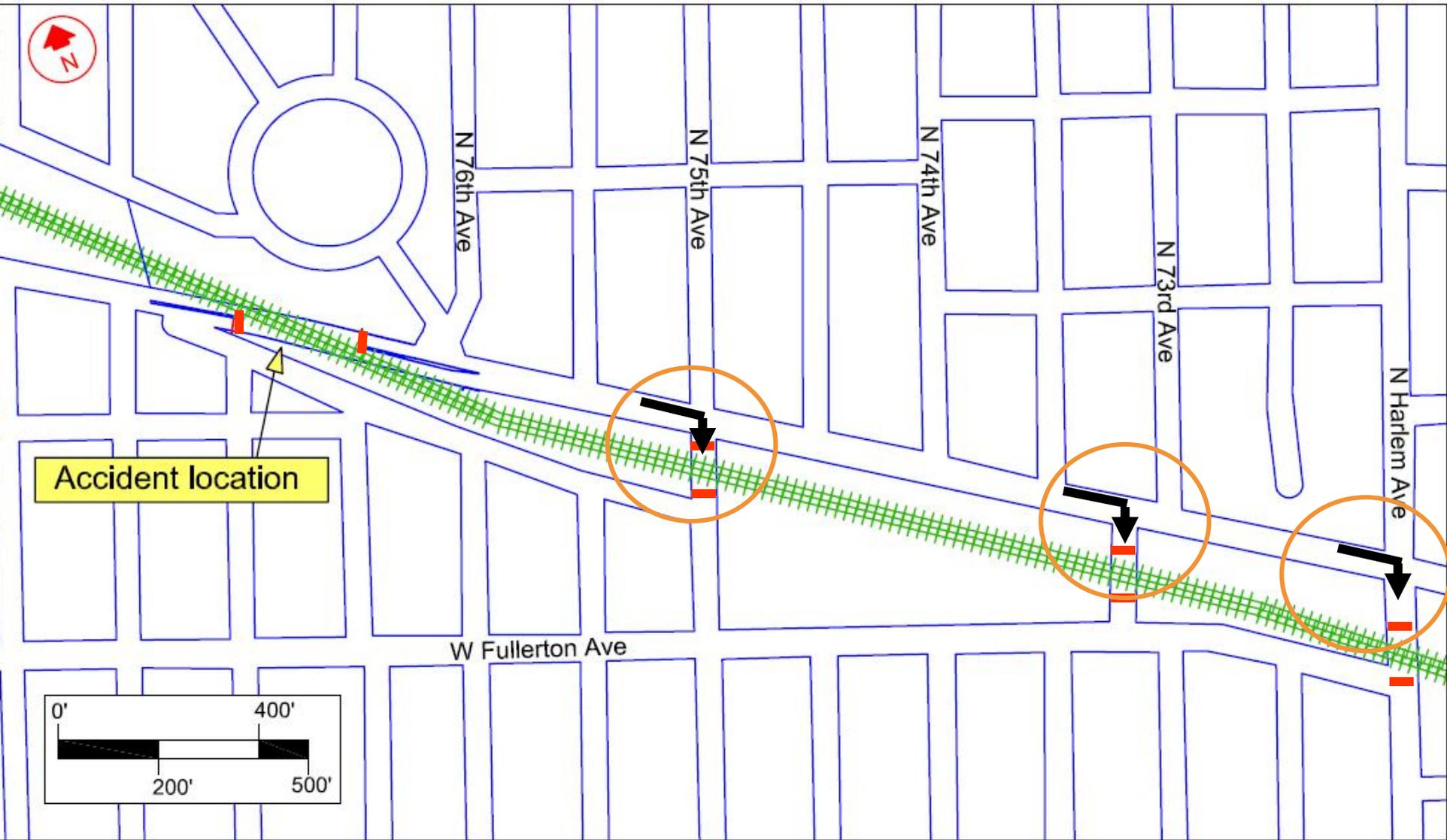
105



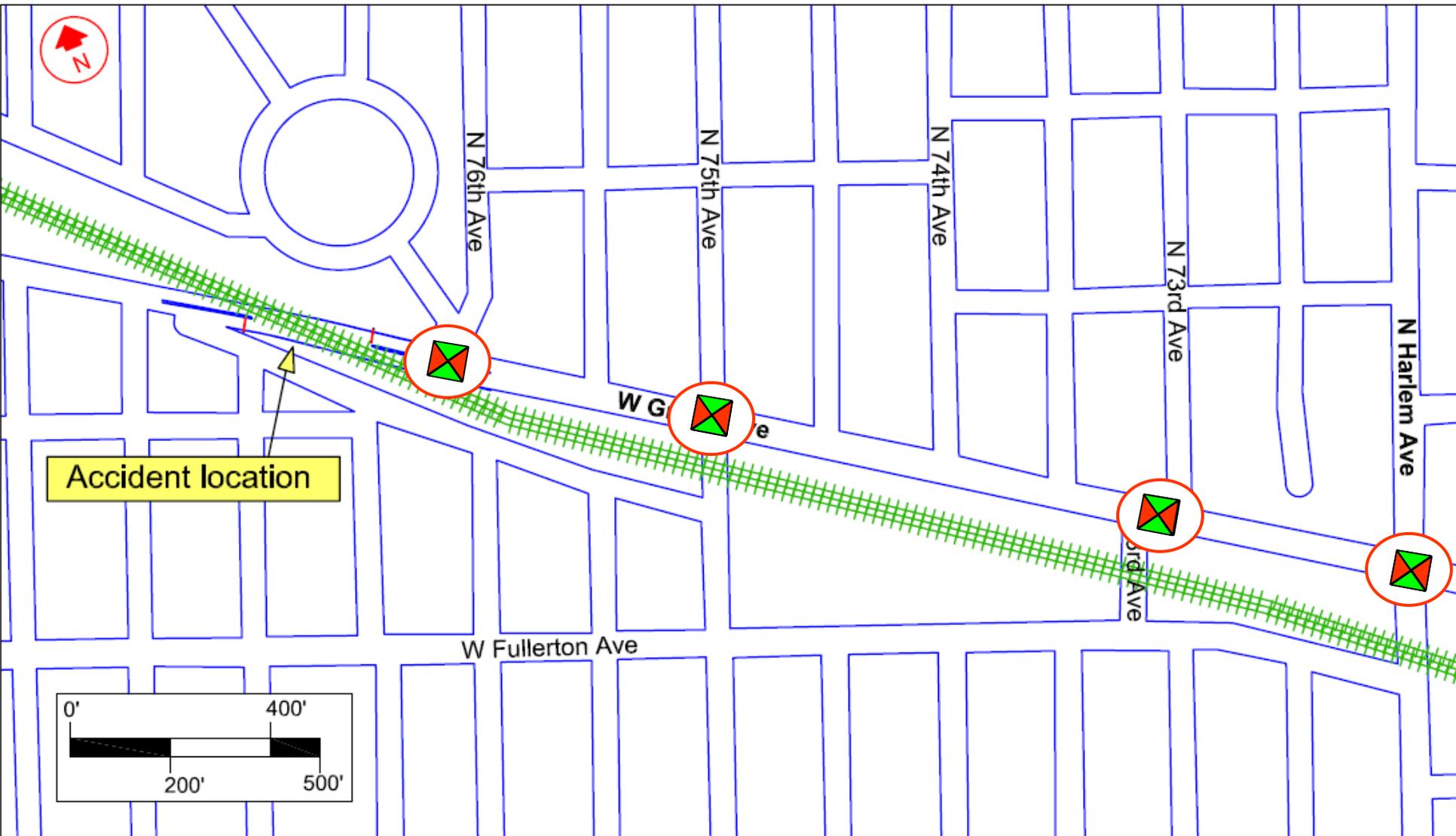
# Signals Preempted by Train Traffic



# Right Turns Precluded



# Desynchronization of Traffic Lights



# Grade Crossing Accident History

- Forty-five accidents since 1956, resulting in 7 fatalities and 27 injuries
- 2004 and 2005 accidents occurred on Thanksgiving Eve

# Preaccident Mitigation Efforts

- 2002: West Grand Avenue crossing the most hazardous in Illinois
- 2002-2005 IDOT/ICC safety efforts
  - Fiber optic traffic signal system
  - Public education
  - Signal coordination program
  - Overhead sign renewal and pavement marking installation
  - Supplemental warning signs

# Postaccident Mitigation Efforts

- IDOT, ICC, and Village of Elmwood Park consensus on grade separation
- 2005-2007 IDOT/ICC safety efforts
  - Track speed reduced to 30 mph
  - Permanent changeable message warning sign installed
  - Traffic signal timing modified
  - Bus stop east of grade crossing removed

# Postaccident Mitigation Efforts

- 2005-2007 IDOT/ICC safety efforts
  - Operation Lifesaver efforts increased
  - Low-mount “Do Not Stop on Track” signs and amber warning flashers installed
  - Crosshatch pavement markings within the crossing area installed

# Feasibility Study

- Purpose: to identify engineering options for improving grade crossing
- Three options identified
  - Highway overpass
  - Highway underpass
  - Lowered highway and raised rail (preferred option)
- Next step: engineering and environmental assessment study

# NEWS



## FRANCHISE DISCLOSURE

Updated franchise rule spells good news for prospective franchisees.

See Business, page 65

## SALT FROM THE EARTH



New artisan salts from dozens of countries please many palates.

See Food, page 59

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### WHAT'S NEW AROUND TOWN THIS WEEK

#### Pesko named to Youth Commission

The Elmwood Park Village Board approved the nomination of Chris Pesko to the Elmwood Park Youth Commission. Pesko will take the place of Thomas Senn, who recently retired from the program. Pesko hopes to head up the flag football program, and assist with the tackle football program.

Pesko was recommended in letter from Doris Bogg, chairman of the Youth Commission, which was presented to the Village Board by Village President Peter Silvestri.

### WHAT'S NEXT UPCOMING NEXT WEEK

#### Raiders changing name to Rush

The Elmwood Park Youth Commission has been approved to change the name of their tackle football team from the Elmwood Park Raiders to the Elmwood Park Rush. The commission has accepted sponsorship from the Chicago Rush Arena Foot

## ON THE WRONG SIDE



An Elmwood Park High School sophomore on her way to school last Wednesday was appalled to see a school bus between the gate and the tracks on Grand Avenue. There were children on the bus, which backed up away from the tracks before the train came. "I'm just trying to show people what mindless driving does," she said. She asked that she not be identified.

# Summary of Issues

- Heavy train and vehicle traffic
- Multiple traffic lanes and tracks
- Skewed crossing angle
- Grade crossing boundaries hard to judge
- Three other crossings within ½ mile
- Other three crossings interconnected, causing congestion on West Grand Ave.
- **Result: Queuing of traffic onto tracks**



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